

Pianist **REIKO UCHIDA** enjoys an active career as a soloist and chamber musician. She performs regularly throughout the United States, Asia, and Europe, in venues including Suntory Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the 92nd Street Y, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Kennedy Center, and the White House. First prize winner of the Joanna Hodges Piano Competition and Zinetti International Competition, she has appeared as a soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Santa Fe Symphony, Greenwich Symphony, and the Princeton Symphony, among others. She made her New York solo debut in 2001 at Weill Hall under the auspices of the Abby Whiteside Foundation. As a chamber musician she has performed at the Marlboro, Santa Fe, Tanglewood, and Spoleto Music Festivals; as guest artist with Camera Lucida, American Chamber Players, and the Borromeo, Talich, Daedalus, St. Lawrence, and Tokyo String Quartets; and in recital with Jennifer Koh, Thomas Meglitoranza, Anne Akiko Meyers, Sharon Robinson, and Jaime Laredo. Her recording with Jennifer Koh, “String Poetic” was nominated for a Grammy Award. She is a past member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Two. As a youngster, she performed on Johnny Carson’s Tonight Show. Ms. Uchida holds a Bachelor’s degree from the Curtis Institute of Music, a Master’s degree from the Mannes College of Music, and an Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School. She studied with Claude Frank, Leon Fleisher, Edward Aldwell, Margo Garrett, and Sophia Rosoff. She has taught at the Brevard Music Center, and is currently an associate faculty member at Columbia University.

Violinist **JEFF THAYER** is currently the concertmaster of the San Diego Symphony. Previous positions include assistant concertmaster of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, associate concertmaster of the North Carolina Symphony, concertmaster and faculty member of the Music Academy of the West (Santa Barbara), and concertmaster of the Canton (OH) Symphony Orchestra. He is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Eastman School of Music, and the Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division. His teachers include William Preucil, Donald Weilerstein, Zvi Zeitlin, Dorothy DeLay, and James Lyon. He has appeared as soloist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the San Diego Symphony, the Jupiter Symphony, the North Carolina Symphony, the Canton Symphony Orchestra, the Pierre Monteux School Festival Orchestra, the Spartanburg Philharmonic, the Cleveland Institute of Music Symphony Orchestra, The Music Academy of the West Festival Orchestra, the Williamsport Symphony Orchestra, the Nittany Valley Symphony Orchestra, and the Conservatory Orchestra of Cordoba, among others. He attended Keshet Eilon (Israel), Ernen Musikdorf (Switzerland), Music Academy of the West, Aspen, New York String Orchestra Seminar, the Quartet Program, and as the 1992 Pennsylvania Governor Scholar, Interlochen Arts Camp. Through a generous loan from Irwin and Joan Jacobs and the Jacobs’ Family Trust, Mr. Thayer plays on the 1708 “Sir Bagshawe” Stradivarius.

A native of Taiwan, **MANN-WEN LO** has been playing the violin since the age of five. She made her orchestral debut performing Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 2 at age eleven at the National Concert Hall in Taipei. She has received numerous awards at various competitions and auditions such as Toyama Asian Youth Competition (Hong Kong), Taipei Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition (Taipei), and the International Chamber Music Ensemble Competition (New York). Mann-Wen has been featured on radio stations such as NPR’s From the Top and WGBH. She has collaborated in chamber music concerts with artists such as Glenn Dicterow, Ettore Causa, David Shifrin, Frank Morelli, William Purvis, and Hye-Sun Paik. Her chamber music mentors include members of the Tokyo, Borromeo, Juilliard and Takacs String Quartets. She has also studied chamber music with artists such as Peter Frankl, Daniel Phillips, Kim Kashkashian and Lucy Chapman. Mann-Wen’s festival appearances include the Gstaad String Academy at the Menuhin Festival, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Music Academy of the West, Franco-American Chamber Music Festival, Saito Kinen Festival Seiji Ozawa’s Young Musician Study Group, New York String Orchestra Seminar and Orford Arts Academy. Aside from classical music, Mann-Wen also performs jazz and various other genres with the Kaleidoscope Trio, an innovative group with the creative combination of guitar, clarinet and violin. Mann-Wen received her Bachelors degree from the New England Conservatory of Music and her Masters from the Yale School of Music. Her

principal teachers include Masuko Ushioda and Syoko Aki. She has recently earned her Graduate Certificate from USC Thornton School of Music, and is currently a Doctor of Musical Arts candidate under the tutelage of Glenn Dicterow. Mann-Wen plays on a 1925 Guiseppe Fiorini violin on generous loan from the Chi Mei Culture Foundation in Taiwan.

Taiwanese-American violist **CHE-YEN CHEN** has established himself as an active performer. He is a founding member of the Formosa Quartet, recipient of the First-Prize and Amadeus Prize winner of the 10th London International String Quartet Competition. Since winning First-Prize in the 2003 Primrose Competition and “President Prize” in the Lionel Tertis Competition, Chen has been described by San Diego Union Tribune as an artist whose “most impressive aspect of his playing was his ability to find not just the subtle emotion, but the humanity hidden in the music.” Having served as the principal violist of the San Diego Symphony for eight seasons, he is the principal violist of the Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra, and has appeared as guest principal violist with Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Canada’s National Arts Centre Orchestra. A former member of Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society Two and participant of the Marlboro Music Festival, he is also a member of Camera Lucida, and The Myriad Trio. Chen is currently on faculty at USC Thornton School of Music, and has given master-classes in major conservatories and universities across North America and Asia. In August 2013, the Formosa Quartet inaugurated their annual Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Hualien, Taiwan. Modeled after American summer festivals such as Ravinia, Taos, Marlboro, and Kneisel Hall, FCMF is the product of long-held aspirations and years of planning. It represents one of the quartet’s more important missions: to bring high-level chamber music training to talented young musicians; to champion Taiwanese and Chinese music; and to bring first-rate chamber music to Taiwanese audiences.

Cellist **CHARLES CURTIS** has been Professor of Music at UCSD since Fall 2000. Previously he was Principal Cello of the Symphony Orchestra of the North German Radio in Hamburg, a faculty member at Princeton, the cellist of the Ridge String Quartet, and a sought-after chamber musician and soloist in the classical repertoire. A student of Harvey Shapiro and Leonard Rose at Juilliard, on graduation Curtis received the Piatigorsky Prize of the New York Cello Society. He has appeared as soloist with the San Francisco, National and Baltimore Symphonies, the Symphony Orchestra of Berlin, the NDR Symphony, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the BBC Scottish Symphony, the Janacek Philharmonic, as well as orchestras in Italy, Brazil and Chile. He is internationally recognized as a leading performer of unique solo works created expressly for him by composers such as La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, Éliane Radigue, Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff, Alison Knowles and Tashi Wada. Time Out New York called his recent New York performances “the stuff of contemporary music legend,” and the New York Times noted that Curtis’ “playing unflinchingly combined lucidity and poise... lyricism and intensity.” Recent seasons have included solo concerts at New York’s Issue Project Room and Roulette, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Sub Tropics Festival in Miami, the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, the Angelica Festival in Bologna as well as solo performances in Brussels, Metz, Paris, Mexico City, and Athens. Last summer Curtis led four performances of the music of La Monte Young at the Dia Art Foundation’s Dia:Chelsea space in New York.

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Chamber Music Concerts at UC San Diego
Monday, April 30, 2018 – 7:30 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

String Quartet in F major, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Opus 59 Nr. 1 “Razumovsky”

Allegro
Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando
Adagio molto e mesto;
Thème russe: Allegro

intermission

Piano Quartet in g minor, Opus 26 Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Allegro
Intermezzo: Allegro ma non troppo
Andante con moto
Rondo alla Zingarese: Presto

Jeff Thayer and Mann-Wen Lo, violins
Che-Yen Chen, viola
Charles Curtis, violoncello
Reiko Uchida, piano

String Quartet in F major, Opus 59 Nr. 1 “Razumovsky”– Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven’s revolutionary Op. 59 string quartets provoked strong opinions in 1806. While some critics hailed Beethoven as a genius, others described Op. 59 as “*verrückte Musik* (crazy music),” and dismissed the quartets as a botched experiment conceived by a lunatic. Even the musicians who premiered the work were not above disbelief: according to Czerny, the opening gesture of the second movement in the solo cello provoked uncontrollable laughter and incredulity during its first rehearsal (Romberg allegedly stomped on the cello part), perhaps at the prospect of having to stoop to such preposterously puerile music. And yet, despite the many moments of absurdity, Op. 59 No. 1 remains a work of utmost seriousness and sincerity. Of the three Razumovsky Quartets, it is perhaps the greatest in its affective contrasts and all-encompassing emotional breadth -- a mind-boggling feat when one considers its motivic density and economy of means.

Beethoven’s resourcefulness is on full display in the Finale, which is derived virtually in its entirety from a Russian folksong melody, introduced by the cello at the outset and subsequently adorned with syncopated accompaniment. Beethoven manipulates this theme in a variety of sophisticated ways, as expected; but the most poignant shift occurs in the recapitulation, when the theme returns untransposed, but nonetheless in a different key. Through this gesture Beethoven seems to be revealing his poetic side: the rediscovery of the same theme, with exactly the same notes but in a new key, may perhaps be interpreted as an allegory of renewal, or as an affirmation of the continued identity of the self despite changed surroundings.

Apart from a cadenza-esque transition to the finale, the third movement is an unremitting emotional assault that layers longing upon melancholy. Some critics have even gone as far as to criticize the movement as been “too sentimental” and “overstated”. The pained opening theme with its sighing gestures eventually gives way to a second theme in D-flat Major, which Adorno describes as a “character of dawning hope”, but it is eventually revealed to be a kind of false hope as it fails to achieve a convincing climax and instead meekly gives way once again to the movement’s melancholic main theme.

Beethoven’s subversiveness is found throughout the work: the second movement is hardly a typical scherzo. As is often the case in Beethoven’s scherzi, the composer’s sense of humor seems sharply inflected by a certain brutality, at times even a level of violence, bordering on sadism. Beethoven begins by lulling the listener into a false sense of security by developing the opening motif into a gently lyrical hymn, which swerves sharply into an ominous, militaristic theme in d minor, terminating on the same rhythm as the cheeky opening bars, but now transformed into something unimaginable, perhaps even terrifying; this interplay gives rise to all kinds of unexpected affective states, including an abrupt sense of poignant longing in the uncharacteristically long ascending and descending scale melodies. The transformational arc of the second movement alone seems to invoke E. T. A. Hoffmann’s famous, arch-Romantic description of Beethoven’s music: “Beethoven’s music opens up to us the realm of the monstrous and

the immeasurable. Burning flashes of light shoot through the deep night of this realm, and we become aware of giant shadows that surge back and forth, driving us into narrower and narrower confines until they destroy us, but not the pain of that endless longing in which each joy that has climbed aloft in jubilant song sinks back and is swallowed up, and it is only in this pain, which consumes love, hope, and happiness but does not destroy them, which seeks to burst our breasts with a many-voiced consonance of all the passions, that we live on, enchanted beholders of the supernatural!”

Piano Quartet in g minor, Opus 26 – Johannes Brahms

It would be no exaggeration to describe Brahms’ chamber music output as the most important, the greatest, one might as well say, since Beethoven. It is also the last sustained enquiry into the form, and its final blossoming. From the first Piano Trio of 1854 to the late Clarinet Sonatas Opus 120 of 1894, Brahms’ chamber music is innovative, replete with extraordinary detail and attention to the materialities of each instrument, and above all suffused with an affinity, a love for the genre, making it the ideal home for Brahms’ particular expressive genius.

The two great Piano Quartets, composed in tandem from the late 1850’s until the end of 1861 while Brahms was still living in Hamburg, stand amongst a group of illustrious chamber works from the same period including the two string sextets, the Horn Trio and the Piano Quintet. Tonight’s piano quartet, in fact, was one of the first of Brahms’ works to be played in Vienna, during his first visit there in the autumn of 1862, with Brahms himself at the piano. This early group of large-scale -- not to say massive -- chamber works, larger in scale, indeed, than almost any previous chamber music with the exception of Beethoven’s eccentric late string quartets and a handful of Schubert’s, show Brahms in what Donald Tovey called his “first maturity.” Brahms’ emulation of Beethoven is evident in the careful curating of motivic development as a kind of self-replication, self-formation, the blossoming of sonata form as an organic emergence from an internal source. This drama of becoming is captured by the untranslatable German word *Bildung*. But we must not forget the drama of atmosphere and texture which Brahms took from Chopin, or from Chopin via Schumann. The Intermezzo in particular lives in an imagined world of aristocratic dance and chivalry, where rank is bestowed on the basis of charm and the exactly appropriate dosage of rubato.

Opus 25 seems to gather force and momentum over its entire length. The leanness of the opening material builds through extension, not mass; tiny motivic elements, sometimes no more than a two-note sequence, are spun out exhaustively in combinatorial patterns. The beautiful coda sets a spiderweb-like barriolage figure in the violin against triplet ornaments in the piano; a final surging up of the opening theme promises massiveness, but recedes to a quiet exit. The Intermezzo, ornate and detailed, presents a quietly restless, writhing texture, eventually opening out to the cautious ebullience of the Trio, *piu animato*. The slow movement builds further: not, as is usual, a period of restraint or rest in the larger form of the work, but effusive, an outpouring, full-throated. One imagines a group of impassioned

singers surrounding the youthful Brahms at the piano, holding forth for all they are worth. The middle section, at first like a military fanfare in the distance, escalates to truly symphonic scale and massiveness.

The Finale is the first appearance of the so-called *style hongrois* in Brahms’ music, an idiomatic element which would reappear throughout his subsequent career. It seems that Hungarian political refugees passed through Hamburg on their way to the United States after the failed revolutions of 1848, and Brahms had the opportunity to experience their music as a teenager. Later he toured as piano accompanist to the Hungarian expatriate violinist Ede Reményi, and he would have learned the style from intimate musical contact. “Rondo alla zingarese” is meant to refer to the gypsy style, and to all that the image of the gypsy might have evoked for the squarely bourgeois young composer. This Finale is utter frenzy; when it seems it can go no further, the piano plunges via a cadenza-like descent into sudden silence, as if the dancer had collapsed in exhaustion; gradually revived by the ministrations of the strings, the movement ends once more in wild affirmation.

— Amir Moheimani and Charles Curtis

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